

THE MIRROR;
OR,
A DEFENCE AGAINST THE UNKIND ATTACKS
MADE UPON THE
Methodist New Connexion,
BY THE
REVS. MESSRS. J. ANDERSON, R. NEWTON,
AND OTHERS,
IN RECENT MEETINGS.

BY A LAY MEMBER.

To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word. it
is because there is no light in them."—Isaiah viii. 20.

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TO THE READER.

THE writer exceedingly regrets that any occasion has been given to call forth this defence, and that it has not been taken up by some one more competent to the task, as he is very certain that among the body he has the honour to be connected with there are many who are well qualified to defend the system adopted by them ; and, as an humble individual, conceives that whilst we are prudent we should not be cowardly.

Wes. 1468

A DEFENCE.

THE Methodist New Connexion having been subjected to much ridicule and contempt for many years, yea, ever since its formation, and very recently in a society meeting of the Wesleyan Methodists in the Manchester South Circuit, of which the Rev. John Anderson is superintendent, the writer conceives himself entitled, in defence, at this important crisis to offer a few remarks; yet wishes it to be perfectly understood that he has no personal ill will against any individual or individuals, principles and practices being the subject of his consideration. He, therefore, for himself and the church and people to whom he is united, claims the privilege and right of being heard, before condemnation and sentence are passed. Though some have heaped upon us calumny and reproach, proofs are yet wanting to establish the same. I consider, if we have so long submitted tamely to the insults and odium cast upon us, that it is now time we should shake off our lethargy, and shew ourselves like men and Christians.

It has been insultingly and sneeringly asked, what are we—what have we done—and what are we doing? And evidently with a wish to keep those back from joining our ranks or adopting our rules, who find that they cannot be satisfied with less than the same, and that they have a right to equal privileges with us. I would, therefore, in reply to our opponents, and particularly Messrs. James Wood, the Rev. J. Anderson, and R. Newton, say, we are the Methodist New Connexion, the same that was formed in 1797, and have never deviated from the grand principle of lay representation with which we set out; nor have we seen any reason to regret the adoption of the heaven-born principle.

We have never changed our colours, nor altered our standard, finding ourselves based upon the Word of Truth. For proof, see an excellent tract, written by the Rev. T. Allin, of Sheffield (price one penny or 7s. 6d. per hundred). We have thus been enabled to maintain our opinions, and not only so but to increase our borders.

—Yes ! our little bark has been nearly forty years upon the boisterous ocean. Many a wave of trouble has she had to encounter ; many a tempestuous storm of bigotry, priestly enmity, and worldly policy has she had to contend with ; many a mighty rock of unprincipled opposition and persecution, and many a hidden, deceitful shifting sand-bank has she come in contact with. But neither the waves that have broken over her head and threatened to overwhelm her, under which she has seemed to sink to rise no more, nor the storm, though it might rage to a tempest, nor bigotry, priestly enmity, worldly policy, nor any rock or sand-bank, has been able to destroy her. She is still in being, and is plying about, offering a peaceful, safe, and steady passage to all who are anxious to embark.

Nor has she lost her compass—the pure Word of God; nor has her Pilot or her Captain, who both are one, (for she recognizes none but Christ as her head, her all,) yet deserted her : she lives in the hearts of a free and happy people. Upon her main-mast is unfurled the lovely banner of the cross—a banner under which thousands have rallied and found salvation, a hearty welcome, and a peaceful home. Her “anchor sure and steadfast, cast within the veil.”

Her friends have seen her rise and rear her lovely form amid the blaze of gospel day ;—nor hellish rage, nor canting hypocrisy, nor tainting breath of calumny, have yet been able to divert her from her purpose, or stay her steady course. She is well manned, and fitted up from head to stern—above, below, on deck—each man to man in love united, wishful to increase by every lawful means her speed and usefulness—every man on board having his right, each a share in all her stores, a voice and freedom to speak out and give the watch-word. And will she stand the scrutinizing eye of truth ?

I trow she will. Her timbers must be good, if not a crack appears after all the storms and tempests through which she has been called to pass. Many a volley has she received from the enemies’ ship, but not a single plank has failed. Ask her crew does she ever spring a-leak or threaten to sink them in the deep ? And what’s the answer ? No. Her bottom is good and sound. “How can she sink with such a prop, that bears the world and all things up ?” Thousands has she

carried safe and landed on the eternal shore, who are now safe from every storm—"where not a wave of trouble rolls across their peaceful breast." And daily is she taking in and daily landing on the heavenly shore. Though she be envied, she envies not the discontented numbers, or internal strifes of any of her competitors. Has one sufficient reason yet been assigned why she should regret her choice? Amongst all her enemies has one yet proved she is not well built and safe? They may say so, but to the proof. Yes, to the proof. Neither her open and avowed enemies, nor false pretending friends who have deserted her have yet come forward and succeeded in the all-important task. Let them swell, and spout, and talk, but sound, logical, scriptural reasoning we want, we claim. We court fair investigation, honest and attentive hearing, nor less shall we be satisfied with. Has it ever yet been proved we are unscriptural either in our rules or doctrine? Can either Messrs. James Wood, the Rev. J. Anderson, or the all-important Rev. Robert Newton prove this? If they all, or any of them, can do so, let them come forward like men and Christians, and dispel the mist of ignorance from our eyes; wipe away the film that darkens our mental vision with the glorious rays of truth. It will be far more consistent and honourable than making us the subject of ridicule and contempt in either a Society or a Special Leaders' Meeting. We ask who shall lay any thing to our charge?— "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

We profess not infallibility, but claim our right to think and judge for ourselves. We respect and love all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, nor do we wish to live upon our neighbour's character, for poor indeed must that system be that has no better source!

The Methodist New Connexion wants only fair sea room to shew herself, exert her powers, and follow her calling. In the name of her Lord and Master she has entered into the ripened field of harvest, and claims on his behalf the liberty to work, to store her vessel, and transport to the garner of her God.

I can assure those gentlemen who so much despise and persecute her, that she wishes not to court the smile and favour of a few (though rich they be) at the expense

of the liberties of her people ; nor cares she for their frowns. " If God be for us, who shall be against us ? "

Yes, true—she has been heavily loaded with unjust reproach ; she has borne the epithet of Jacobin, heretical, &c. Her name has been associated with that of Paine, Voltaire, Rousseau, &c. ; but what of that ?—She owns them not any more than others : their infidelity she disclaims—their vices she condemns. For a proof see the sermons of one of her brightest ornaments on Modern Atheism ; I mean the Rev. T. Allin, of Sheffield.

She has been represented as unfaithful to her king and country, but no proof has yet been given ; and be it understood, she is no more accountable for the actions of private individuals (unless sanctioned by her as a whole) than either the Wesleyans or any other are. She wishes to

" Seize upon Truth where'er 'tis found,
Among her friends, among her foes,
On Christian or on Heathen ground,
The flower divine where'er it grows—
Neglect the prickles and assume the rose." *Watts.*

She wishes not to indulge in a spirit of bigotry ; for, as Mr. Jay in his sermons justly observes, " the readiest way to thin heaven and replenish hell is to call in the spirit of bigotry."

If our enemies cannot think with us, why should we suffer on that account their vile abuse ? why should our name be cast out as evil ? Christian charity forbids. Have we not a right to labour in the cause of God ? What are we, that we should not be allowed to labour ? Let truth and honesty answer—let reason answer—let her heaven-born sons answer—let our peaceful yet extending borders answer—let our Sabbath Schools answer—let our rules and privileges answer—let the demand of thousands of enlightened discontented Wesleyans, who are claiming equal rights and laws with us, answer—let the Scriptures of truth answer. (See a Tract lately published by the Rev. T. Allin, of Sheffield.) Let the thousands who have landed safe on Canaan's happy shore, who were in our little bark, give the answer—let the angels who have rejoiced over the numbers who by us, in the hands of God, have been plucked as brands from the fire, answer—let God himself give

the answer, for he has owned, he has blessed, and Ichabod is not written on our walls.

Go to one of the Wesleyan Ministry (a mighty one) who was pleased to denominate us, "that now respectable body the New Connexion :" this he did when referring to a work written by one of our Ministers. Perhaps he may give the answer ; and surely the word of an infallible will be taken,—yes, "that now respectable," says he. I ask what has made us so ? Has time ? No. Has the voice of discontented members ? No. If we are now respectable, Mr. Newton, (why say so) were we not always so ? Have we turned about ? No. Have we deviated from the grand principle with which we set out ? No. In the name of common honesty and common sense, I claim an answer : we are what we always were in point of principle,—thank GOD, not in point of numbers. We have not sunk down to the standard of public opinion ; it is public opinion that has risen to ours. Thousands have found it out that they were in bondage, and, like the negro slaves, they are rising and demanding freedom, and as they have had a Wilberforce, a Clarke, a Lushington, a Thompson, &c. demanding for them their rights, so in the Methodist world a Stephens, a Forsyth, a Warren, a Barlow, and many others, have stood up like men to the all-important work, demanding, like Moses of old, that the people of the LORD go free, and, like Joshua, no doubt to the field and victory, "to the pulling down of the strong holds." The Wesleyan world have been lulled in the arms of confidence in those who ought to have been tending when fleecing ; and whilst asleep to their interests, have been imperceptibly bound hand and foot with chains of the most degrading kind.

The mighty spirit of the age has done much in the cause of freedom : it is no longer thought just by it that the rich and proud should hold at their disposal the body, blood, and bones of a fellow-creature, because he differs in colour. No ; it has proclaimed liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound ; nor will it rest until there be not a slave under the canopy of heaven : it is the voice of GOD, and "who can stay his hand and say what doest thou ?" This same spirit has seen both the civil, moral, and religious condition of man, and by it the civil and

religious worlds have been shaken to the centre : preparation is making for the in-gathering of all nations, and darkness must be dispelled ; the chariot wheels of the gospel must not be clogged with fat livings, high seats of preferment, and worldly schemes. GOD will not have it so,—“ He wills ; we must obey.” It won’t do to put light for darkness, nor darkness for light, so long as we have bibles at hand,—the pure word of GOD, that word that teaches us to render unto Cæsar his own and no more.

Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne ;
But consciences and souls were made
To be the LORD’s alone.

Watts.

“ What is the New Connexion ?” Why, Sirs, she is a Dissenting Church, dissenting from the Church established by law ; she is what she professes to be—open and honest in her profession and principles : she cannot recognize the right of one Church fattening and living in luxury and unbecoming splendour at the expense of every other,—she cannot find this supported any where in the word of GOD.

The New Connexion cannot sacrifice her principles at the shine of avarice. We cannot fawn upon and flatter the rich and opulent at the expense of every principle of honour, Christian honesty and integrity. Though she condemns none for thinking for themselves, yet she cannot pin her faith and opinions upon the sayings of any fallen creation like ourselves : we agree only with men, just so far as we conclude they agree with Scripture. Yes, we Kilhamites have no more to do either with Wesley or Kilham than to the extent of Scripture truth. We revere the memory of Mr. Wesley, and question whether we have not more of his mind than some who vilely reproach us ; but Mr. Wesley we believe was not infallible, although a Christian indeed and of a truth.

What are we ? We are the same in doctrine, the same in ordinances, with the Wesleyans, differing from them only in matters of church polity. We have free and equal representation ; our ministers do not claim the exclusive right of making laws and rules ; our people have a voice in all—a vote either directly or indirectly. No building Colleges against our people’s will ! I would advise those who wish to know more about us

to refer to our general rules, to the Apology for the New Connexion, and to the Tract by the Rev. Thomas Allin, which I have before alluded to.

What are we? I am inclined to think that those who so insultingly asked the question did not want to know; perhaps merely to convey the idea that we are nobody, or less than nobody. If this be so, why so much ado about nobody, or an insignificant some small-body?—why so much fear?—why the great J. Anderson and R. Newton bother their brains about nobody?—why wish to sink her deeper to the shades if she be some small-body and needs bringing to the light to be seen. Bring her forth, and if they cannot see her without a glass let them put one on; bring her to the light of truth. I don't expect you will, reverend gentlemen, for it was said by those lips that never spake an untruth, and I have read it, "that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

"What is she?" Mr. Wood asks Mr.—what she is? You once did refer to him, but sorely, no doubt, must you repent that step. His testimony, instead of supporting, cut you all to pieces. Where was your face; did you cover it, or did you not, whilst he bore his testimony to our merit? Did he not say before you and your brethren, that place side by side our Ministers, local and itinerant, with equal numbers of yours, and that we should lose nothing by the comparison. I beg of you now to go and tell Mr. Anderson what we are.

What have we done? Ask the numbers that have been awakened under the ministry of the word preached by us as a body, that have been proselyted by yours,—the way has been—"Come to our fine chapel—see our splendid chapel—our large body—respectable congregations." This and similar language has been made use of, and numbers have been awakened through the instrumentality of the New Connexion, and led away by the multitude. We have laboured in hundreds of instances, and others have reaped the benefit; not allowing them to be made acquainted with our rules and privileges: of this I am a living witness. Our name has been cast out as evil, and we have had to labour through much opposition. It is a wonder we are in being at all: had not the divine hand delivered and supported us we should have fallen long since a prey to

our enemies; but we have reason to thank GOD and take courage.

What have we done? We have taken the lead, nearly forty years, of the Methodist world in point of rule, to the surprise of thousands and the consternation of not a few. Our principles are daily gaining ground, and we have laboured against public opinion, but our labours are nearly over—at least the heaviest of the storm is past. We have increased in numbers and in usefulness as much or more, according to our strength, and all things considered, than our enemies are aware, and perhaps than those from whom we have seceded, during the last eight or ten years. Ask in ten years to come what we are. “I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet,” but time will tell a tale. If we have got thus far against wind and tide, what may we expect when assisted by both?—What have we done? We have got a free and happy people on their way to heaven, who once “were in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” and are expecting more, for GOD has promised, and he is faithful, unworthy though we confess we are, and unfaithful, but our heavenly Father is compassionate. What a blessed thing it is that man will not be our judge!

What are our prospects? Cheering! We are building chapels, one or more in nearly every principal town in the kingdom where we have an interest. Peace and prosperity obtain in all our borders. We are not seeking to make proselytes of any. If any join us from principle, we are willing to give them the right hand of fellowship. We want no discontented members: we wish all to be at home and peaceable, to enjoy their rights. I am speaking on behalf of ourselves as a body; not of individuals who outstep, in their zeal, the bounds of prudence. And whilst I rejoice at the march of intellect, and to see the people determined to be free, I am, on the other hand, much pained at the thought, that numbers of precious souls may lose their way, and grieved to think that men, professing to have their hearts filled with love to GOD, should seem, nay, in fact, really care so little for the ransomed souls of the church as to sacrifice them at the shrine of ambition and the love of power. Who shall answer for this at the bar of GOD? “O that they were wise, that they

understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Ask the question, how many will lose their way by these internal strifes? And would you, ye ministers of CHRIST, sooner see the flock devoured, than come down from your high seats of power and save them? Yes, says one, sooner shall these hands minister to the necessities of myself and family, than I will agree to lay-representatives being in Conference. Not all the loss of souls that may be calculated upon will yet lead them one step lower. How unlike Him who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor!"

Look, ye ministers of Christ, at your bleeding Connexion, and if you will not give the people their own, pray do weep over the loss of souls. Are ye yet hard? O, think, think, ye have not so learned of CHRIST. He wept over Jerusalem when thinking upon the sorrows and misery that awaited it.

Some have condemned our Connexion, as well as others, because of the steps we have taken in the questions which now occupy the attention of the dissenting world. And some are so weak as to suppose that ministers of the gospel ought not to have anything to do with state affairs, but we as a body claim the right: it is the bounden duty of ministers to look out for the hindrances to the work of GOD to see that nothing impedes the progress of the ark of the covenant. Where are Moses, and Caleb, and Joshua?—ask them. The Saviour's example is a sufficient guarantee:—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, blind guides," &c. &c.; and the apostle James:—"Go to now, ye rich men, weep, howl," &c. (James v. 1.) What were the reformers, Wickliff, Luther, Calvin, &c.? How did they labour to bring about the glorious Reformation? Where are our forefathers who bled and suffered in the cause of religious freedom? Their example we have before us, and if we are wrong, so were they.

The Methodist New Connexion stands on the same ground with their respected fellow Christians, the Baptists, the Independents, and the Primitive and Protestant Methodist and other Christian churches, who hold their rights and liberties dear as their lives, and we love all who are partners of like precious faith with ourselves. We wish the day to arrive when sectarian spirit shall be no more; when all names shall be lost in the common

name of brother and of Christian, and wish that day to arrive when, in the beautiful language of Mr. Montgomery, all the united efforts of the Christian churches shall harmonize together like the prismatic colours of the rainbow, forming an arch of glory, ascending on the one hand from earth to heaven, and descending on the other from heaven to earth—a bow of promise as a sign that the storm is passing away, and that the Sun of Righteousness is arising with healing under his wings, breaking forth on all nations.

But a word or two to Mr. Newton. Are you, Sir, prepared to prove that we as a body are tyrants to our ministers, and that many of them want to join your body. Sir, prove it; I call upon you to prove it. As you have stated it, to the proof. I shall, as an individual, hold it false and calumnious until you have proved it. We have had sufficient proof that you were ever ready to receive our preachers. Where are the—aye, Sir, that were fed and clothed and equipped for the work, and who, in their gratitude for what had been done for them by the Connexion, turned round and forsook it —held up, as a good man observed, like as an auctioneer holds up an article to be sold to the highest bidder. If our ministers are ill used, why do they not speak? They are not tongue-tied and compelled to be silent under pain of excommunication. Thank GOD, we have a ministry we love, and who give evident, yea abundant proof that they love the Connexion: they are all brethren, and enjoy equal honours; none master—one is their Master, even Christ. If we formerly had a Judas or two, thanks be to heaven they have left behind them men of clean hands and pure hearts, such as shall see GOD. I speak advisedly when I state these things, and a well-wisher to the cause of CHRIST by whomsoever undertaken, and remain,

JAMES ROBINSON.

Manchester, Nov. 14, 1834.

P. S.—The author hopes to be excused for bad grammar, because he has not been at College.